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New York

President:	Mr. Taiana	(Argentina)
Members:	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Congo	Mr. Gayama
	Denmark	Mr. Faaborg-Andersen
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mrs. Bakoyannis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. Forsyth Mejia
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The question concerning Haiti

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06-28535 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Representation and welcome to Ministers

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset of the meeting, I should like to acknowledge and welcome the presence in the Council Chamber of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Public Service of the Bahamas, The Honourable Mr. Frederick A. Mitchell; the Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, His Excellency Mr. Antonio Patriota; the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile, His Excellency Mr. Alberto Van Klaveren; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, His Excellency Mr. Carlos Morales Troncoso; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, His Excellency Mr. Jorge Briz Abularach; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guyana, His Excellency Mr. S.R. Insanally; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, Her Excellency Ms. Dora Bakoyannis; and the Deputy Foreign Minister of Peru, His Excellency Mr. Harold Forsyth.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The question concerning Haiti

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Austria, the Bahamas, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Mexico, South Africa, Spain and Venezuela in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I invite His Excellency Mr. René Préval, President-elect of Haiti, under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure, to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council has agreed to invite the following participants who are seated at the table in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure: Mr. Juan Gabriel Valdés, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti; Mr. Ali Hachani, President of the Economic and Social Council; Mr. Albert Ramdin, Deputy Secretary-General of the Organization of American States; and Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Development Programme.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, at this meeting, and I invite him to take the floor.

The Secretary-General: It is good to see so many ministers here for this important meeting, and I am pleased to join the Council for today's discussions on Haiti. Let me start by extending a warm welcome and my congratulations to President-elect Préval.

The first round of national elections that took place last month was a vivid illustration of the faith of the Haitian people in the democratic process and of their determination to make a fresh start. That was clear from the high turnout of voters who waited patiently to cast their ballots, and from the peaceful and pluralistic nature of the electoral process.

Let me also recognize the important contribution that the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) made in helping to ensure the political space and security needed for successful elections. I am sure that the Council will join me in expressing gratitude to my Special Representative, Juan Gabriel Valdés, for his distinguished leadership.

These developments should encourage us to even greater efforts in Haiti, which is only beginning its long journey towards a stable and democratic future. It needs and deserves our assistance to reach that destination. That means a vigorous partnership

between the leadership and the people of Haiti on one hand, and the international community on the other.

We all must reinforce President-elect Préval's efforts to encourage broad political reconciliation. Haiti's institutions of governance require generous support. So do the people of Haiti, who every day endure a level of hardship and insecurity that is unacceptable and also incompatible with the stability of the country.

Days after the elections, the Security Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations operation in Haiti for a further six months. At the same time, it expressed its intention to authorize further extensions. It is right and, indeed, necessary that a multidimensional peacekeeping operation continue. Yet the efforts of MINUSTAH can tackle only the most urgent needs. We need generous and coordinated bilateral assistance to supplement and build on those efforts.

The men and women of Haiti have demonstrated their faith in a better future. Let us work with the President-elect and his team and with the people of Haiti to ensure that they do succeed.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. René Préval, President-elect of Haiti.

Mr. Préval (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): As President-elect of the Republic of Haiti, it is a great pleasure for me to address the Security Council in order to convey to the international community the expectations of the people of Haiti.

I would first like to thank the Security Council, and Argentina in its capacity as President, for the invitation to address the Council. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the core group, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the entire international community for their support for the stabilization process in Haiti.

The massive turnout by the Haitian people in the 7 February elections is an eloquent demonstration of their desire to live in peace and take part in national reconstruction. The turnout was also an indication of their legitimate aspiration for an improvement in their living conditions. It also constitutes meaningful progress in the stabilization process.

Haiti is today a country needing to be built. The problems are enormous, and there is a sense of urgency everywhere. Poverty, widespread unemployment, the dilapidated state of basic infrastructure crucial to development, and chronic insecurity are the major challenges that the next Government must confront.

Increased financial assistance from the international community is proving to be indispensable to consolidate the democratic process and lay the social and economic foundations for Haiti's sustainable development. International assistance must also focus on the reform of democratic institutions — including the Parliament, municipalities and territorial communities and the judicial system — and the professionalization of the police.

I have therefore come here to ask for the support of the international community by calling on it to renew its commitment to a long-term assistance programme for Haiti. In that regard, I would like to refer to resolution 1212 (1998), which emphasized that economic recovery and reconstruction are the main tasks facing the Government and people of Haiti and that significant international assistance is essential for Haiti's sustainable development. In addition, that resolution calls upon United Nations bodies and institutions, especially the Economic and Social Council, to contribute to the development of such a programme. It also calls for the implementation of a post-electoral programme based on creating jobs, improving basic social services and creating conditions for wide-scale private investment.

We must also take into account the Interim Cooperation Framework, which has been extended to December 2007. I call upon donors to continue to meet their pledges by disbursing without delay the funds pledged, in order to support the next Government in its efforts aimed at stabilizing the country and at socio-economic recovery. I welcome the idea of holding an urgent donor conference on Haiti.

There is a close relationship between democracy and economic development. Strengthening democracy — to which the international community has for some time been firmly committed with regard to Haiti — cannot occur without the disbursement of funds. To that end, the support and specific actions of the international community are very important in meeting the Millennium Development Goals, as set out in the Millennium Declaration, as well as in putting

Haiti on an irreversible path towards sustainable development. That calls for making available to the people, most of whom do not share in the progress of the twenty-first century, the necessary conditions for a respectable life.

I would now like to turn to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, which is carrying out a very difficult task. Along with the Haitian National Police, MINUSTAH is working to improve the security situa ion in the country. I commend its efforts. We must now orient its mission towards current priorities and establish an enabling environment in which law prevails over violence and force.

Reform of the police and the Haitian judicial system is clearly essential. It is also necessary to develop their operational capacities and to enable them to meet their legal responsibilities. It is important that an agreement that conforms to the provisions of the Constitution and the rules and regulations of the police be negotiated in mutual respect. Similarly, I call for financial and technical support from the international community for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. I also call on MINUSTAH to work more closely with the Haitian authorities to bring about the necessary changes with regard to the professionalization of the police and the justice system.

I am currently conducting talks with the political class and other components of the nation so that we can, by working together, at long last realize the goal of laying the foundations for a peaceful and democratic social and political system. Those are necessary elements for stability, security, economic recovery and building an inclusive society. I call on the Haitian political class and the other members of civil society to meet with the new Government, in the context of a frank and sincere dialogue, in order to define a governance pact that will create a propitious environment for sound, democratic and participatory governance.

Again, I count on the international community to support the Haitian people in their crusade for peace and sustainable development.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the President-elect of Haiti for his statement.

I now give the floor to Mr. Juan Gabriel Valdés, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

Mr. Valdés (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for once again giving me an opportunity to address the Council. This opportunity is all the more welcome given that we have today the pleasure of having among us the President-elect of Haiti, to whom I extend my best wishes for success. I also renew to him my personal commitment, as well as that of all the members of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), to continue to work together for the success of the transition process in Haiti. There are still major challenges ahead of us in ensuring that the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law become permanent in that country.

For almost two years now, the United Nations Mission has been deployed in Haiti with a mandate that is clearly focused on restoring stability and support for the organization of free, transparent and legitimate elections. Even though we have had to overcome many difficulties in both areas, this has not prevented us from achieving our objectives.

I would like in that respect to underscore the inclusive character of the elections, which saw a massive turnout on the part of all of the political forces in Haiti in the first round. Those factors are the guarantee that the result of the elections — namely, the victory of Mr. René Préval in the presidential elections — clearly reflects the sovereign will of the majority of the population.

In the area of security, while continuing to maximize the benefits of our military and police presence on the ground, we have simplified the command structures in place in order to strengthen direct control by MINUSTAH force headquarters.

Despite the achievement of these major objectives, I am convinced that the mission has only begun. A new cycle of cooperation has begun with the Government of the President-elect, René Préval, during which stress must be placed on strengthening State institutions and on launching a comprehensive and sustainable socio-economic development process. It is important to continue the process of reform aimed at professionalizing the Haitian national police, in which the first milestone should be the certification of all of its officers in order to provide the country with a security force that is capable of ensuring stability and

public safety. But it is also crucial for this process to go hand in hand with a strategy to reform and strengthen judicial institutions and the penal administration.

Apart from the technical aspects necessary to begin these reforms, we also have to think about the Haitian men and women who form the very basis of such institutions. The members of the Haitian national police, as well as the officials of the judicial system, must receive decent salaries and be ensured acceptable working conditions. They must benefit from ongoing professional training, not only in academies but also on the ground, especially in the provinces. I had the opportunity to visit most of the country's regions, and I was struck by the precarious nature of the facilities and the limited resources at the disposal of Haitian national police officers and judges for carrying out their tasks. As long as this situation continues, any reform project will be extremely difficult.

State institutions need greater support from donors and from friendly countries, either in the form of financial assistance or, as the President-elect has said, in the form of services of international experts. During this new stage, it will be important as well to promote reconciliation and dialogue at the national level in order to ensure stability and good governance. That process must involve the active participation of all the country's social forces, not only its political forces; this includes civil society organizations, the private sector, community leaders and provincial officials, as well as authorities of the poor neighbourhoods in the main cities. The process of dialogue should enable Haitians to achieve a common vision of the future. It has to be decentralized in order to take into account the realities — often very different — of each region in the country. The Haitian diaspora must also be called upon to play a role in these initiatives. Reconciliation and dialogue are two crucial elements that will make it possible, in this new era of hope for the country, to prevent any recurrence of political crises, violence or destabilization.

As the President-elect has said, national reconciliation must find its roots in the future of Haiti, and not in its past. While the process of dialogue will be a long-term exercise, we must nonetheless endeavour to achieve results in the short term in areas of concern to the entire population. Reconciliation activities will be decisive in the context of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme involving illegal armed groups in the country.

I fully share the vision expressed by the President-elect as to the need to supplement progress in the area of security and rule of law with socio-economic development, which would lead to an improvement in the living conditions of the population.

Let me cite other examples of discussions that ought to be linked to the dialogue process. How can we manage to produce wealth in a poor country by maximizing its available natural and human resources? How can we create the conditions necessary to stimulate foreign investment? This is a debate that is ongoing in many countries and that could be used to unite political and social forces and to pursue common objectives. These discussions are necessary among the Haitian people; but, once again, they must be able to count on continued assistance from the international community.

In the last two years, the country has begun an economic recovery and seen an improvement in its financial management system, which is extremely interesting. At the same time, the Interim Cooperation Framework has made it possible to set up a coordination mechanism between the Transitional Government and the international community. However, as its name indicates, this is a structure that focuses on the short and medium term. I sincerely hope that cooperation and coordination mechanisms with a longer-term vision will be established in order to optimize cooperation between Haiti, donors and the international community as a whole. Together, we must show those who have been plunged into despair by poverty and who have even resorted to violence that the democratic process can yield tangible benefits in their daily lives. The vast majority of the population continues to live in total deprivation, surviving from day to day in often inhuman conditions.

The Government of Haiti — both the executive and legislative branches — and the international community must show the people of that country that we have the will and the ability to fight extreme poverty and to improve the socio-economic conditions that prevail in Haiti, in the areas of employment and housing as well as access to education, health care and justice. Until the social divide created by the glaring inequalities that exist within Haitian society has been

reduced, we will not be able fully to achieve our objective of stabilizing Haiti permanently.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

It is almost inevitable for international observers, in referring to Haiti, to note that it is the poorest country in the hemisphere. That situation cannot continue to be accepted as an immutable reality. Haiti has a future as a fully viable State, involved in a development process undertaken in full cooperation with the international community. It can and must integrate itself entirely as a full-fledged member of the group of countries of the region.

Here, I would like first to welcome the decision taken by the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to normalize its relations with the Government of Haiti and to receive once again its officials at the meetings of that organization. In particular, I would like to highlight the crucial importance of continuing to intensify cooperation processes between Haiti and its closest neighbour, the Dominican Republic, since those two countries are inextricably linked in terms of their history and development. The successful visit of the President-elect to Santo Domingo, in response to an invitation from the President of the Dominican Republic, is an important and very significant step that represents a hopeful beginning for the new phase that is unfolding in Haiti.

Also important, encouraging and productive were the visits that the President-elect made to Brazil, Chile and Argentina, also in response to official invitations from those Governments. Of particular importance was the renewal of those countries' commitment to continue their vital support to Haiti through the contribution of troops to MINUSTAH. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the participation of Latin American countries, whose contribution represents the majority of troops in the Mission, to the future of stability and democracy in Haiti.

The progress achieved has helped to place the country once again on the road to democracy. However, this process is still fragile and could be seriously jeopardized if there is a premature reduction of the support provided by the military component of the Mission. The experiences of previous peacekeeping missions in Haiti have taught us that it is possible to obtain substantive achievements in the democratic process, but also that such achievements should not be overestimated. Our efforts must continue until the progress made becomes irreversible.

In conclusion, I would like once again to thank the Secretary-General for the trust he has placed in me by appointing me his representative in Haiti. I would also like to thank the Security Council and all of the member countries of the core group for their ongoing and vital support during the discharge of my duties as Special Representative. In addition, I wish to thank the Transitional Government of Haiti for its ongoing cooperation and trust.

It has been an honour to serve the United Nations in the ideals of peace, justice and democracy, which the Organization represents. It has been an honour to be able to help Haiti and its people recover their process of peace and democracy.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. I thank everyone for their understanding and cooperation.

I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Dora Bakoyannis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

Mrs. Bakoyannis (Greece): Allow me to begin, Mr. President, by welcoming your initiative to hold an open debate on the situation in Haiti at this critical juncture, near the end of the transitional period and at the dawn of new, and hopefully better, times. Your presence here underlines the importance that the international community attaches to efforts to stabilize the country and to help the Haitian people in their quest for peace and development.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome to our deliberations His Excellency Mr. René Garcia Préval, President-elect of Haiti, and to congratulate him on his election. In addition, I welcome my colleagues the Ministers for Foreign Affairs who are present at this debate. For my part, I feel privileged to participate in this morning's deliberations, since the relations between my country and Haiti go back a long way, Haiti being the first

country to recognize Greece after it gained its independence.

Greece fully associates itself with the statement to be made later by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union.

After two long years, Haiti's transitional period is coming to an end. Democracy has prevailed once more. The Haitian people will soon have a new President, a new Prime Minister, a new Government, a new legislature and new municipal and local authorities. But above all, Haitians will have new hope for their future — a future that is theirs to build.

The road that lies ahead is full of challenges. First, it is imperative that the second round of legislative elections, as well as the municipal and local elections, be conducted smoothly and take place on time. The next few weeks are extremely crucial, and neither the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) nor the Haitian national authorities should relax their vigilance. The transition of power at all levels, the swearing-in of the new President and the formation of a new Government must move ahead swiftly and unhindered. We urge all parties to remain engaged in the political process and to respect the outcome of the elections.

Haiti's newly elected authorities will have the opportunity to focus their attention on the most immediate and important challenge facing the country: the creation of institutions that uphold the rule of law and protect human rights. Most notable, in this field, would be the reform of the Haitian national police and of the judicial system. As a new Haiti is gradually emerging, we must leave behind us the mentality and practices of the years of transition. From now on, the Haitian national police must not resort to extreme methods and must fully comply with internationally recognized standards of respect for human rights and due process. Impunity is an important issue that must also be addressed.

National dialogue and political reconciliation must continue to be promoted. While it is true that new institutions are in the making, remnants of the old ways continue to abound. To that end, the disarmament of the armed bands that roam the country must definitely be completed. A secure and stable environment will be conducive to fostering economic development and to getting children off the streets and back to school.

As we have all stated on numerous occasions, the Haitian people are the owners of their own future. However, Haiti cannot go it alone and will need considerable help from the international community to implement projects for economic development. We therefore call upon donors to do everything they can to help Haiti at this critical moment and to ensure not only a steady influx of financial aid, but also timely disbursements.

The Haitian Government must, through the Interim Cooperation Framework, reassess assistance priorities and implement projects for long-term economic development that will sustain Haitians' faith in their new Government. The European Union, international financial institutions and other stakeholders must ensure that economic development is channelled to viable projects that will help create jobs and provide basic social services. Greece, for its part, will continue bilateral support in addition to the aid that we already channel through the European Union. Furthermore, on a bilateral basis, I have the pleasure to pledge today an amount of €100,000 in addition to the €100,000 that we contributed last year.

At this point, I would be remiss if I did not express my sincere congratulations to the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdés, on a job well done. I would also like to express my Government's deep appreciation to all those countries that contribute troops and police to MINUSTAH. We utterly condemn all attacks on MINUSTAH and on other international personnel, especially those with humanitarian tasks.

The Security Council will soon consider the mandate and future role of MINUSTAH. For the time being, it suffices to assure the Haitian people that we remain committed to Haiti over the long term.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Harold Forsyth Mejia, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru.

Mr. Forsyth Mejia (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): For me, it is a pleasure to thank you, Mr. Minister, for the brilliant leadership shown by the Argentine Republic in the presidency of the Security Council. The initiative to convene this open debate on the situation in Haiti reaffirms the priority that we accord to the resolution of this crisis. I also wish to welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. René Préval, President-elect of Haiti, and to express to him once

again, on behalf of the Government of Peru, our heartfelt congratulations on his election. We assure him of our commitment to continue to cooperate in supporting his Government's efforts to lay the foundations for a stable society where law, democracy and respect for human rights prevail. Those are conditions essential for the achievement of sustainable development in Haiti.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing and reiterate our commitment and gratitude to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for its extraordinary efforts to contribute to stability in that country, to offer assistance to the Haitian authorities and to ensure an adequate security environment in the country — an environment that was essential for the normal functioning of the recent electoral process.

In addition, my delegation associates itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Rio Group.

The elections held last February were the first step toward the restoration of democracy and stability in Haiti. From now on we face the challenge of preserving peaceful and secure conditions in the country in order to guarantee the continuity of the process.

The second round of the parliamentary elections and the upcoming local and municipal elections require the assistance of the international community and renewed political commitment on the part of the Haitian authorities and people. We believe it is fundamental to continue promoting national political dialogue and reconciliation in order to avoid returning to polarization, violence and chaos.

Peru calls for a broad and lasting national consensus within the Haitian society that would help them to face, in unity, the enormous challenges that lie ahead. Without an understanding of the Haitian citizens themselves that would establish a true national consensus, it is difficult to imagine that the critical social and economic situation that generated the violence two years ago could be overcome. In that context Peru, as an American country in solidarity with the others, shares the desire of the Haitian people for peace, democracy and development and offers its experience in the areas of coordination and national consensus.

Security, the strengthening of democratic institutions and human rights, and the sustainability of the development process are an indissoluble triad. With regard to strengthening the main State institutions — an urgent task for the consolidation of democracy — MINUSTAH must continue to support the Haitian authorities in accordance with its mandate.

For example, the reform of the Haitian national police must be consolidated and completed in such a way as to adapt to the new democratic institutions. Peru is evaluating cooperation modalities for that task, which could include, among other things, the participation of Peruvian national police officers in the Haitian police training centres.

Similarly, comprehensive reform by the Haitian authorities of the justice system and of the human rights protection regime is urgently needed. However, we must keep in mind the kind of crisis in Haiti — a case of disintegration of the social fabric, where criminal activity and the institutional collapse are interlinked. That situation is the result of years of marginalization and extreme poverty, which have generated an enormous environmental disaster.

Regrettably, today Haiti is a country with a great social and physical imbalance. It has one of the highest urban population growth rates in the world, with one of the lowest per capita consumption rates for water, food and energy — the fundamental resources for national survival of any society. That imbalance, resulting from the enormous population growth rate of 3 per cent per annum — one of the highest in Latin America — has destroyed the habitat through relentless deforestation that has produced enormous soil erosion, sedimentation and loss of fertility. Consequently, there is insufficient water to grow crops and generate power, both crucial elements for the life of the Haitian population. Recovery from the ecological damage in Haiti will be extremely difficult, as the current global climate change will worsen the social and physical imbalance.

Because of all of those grave issues, we reiterate that now is the time for the efforts of the international community — of all the countries that are friends of Haiti, both in this hemisphere and around the world — to decidedly come together in long-term support of the Haitian Government and people. We believe that Haiti needs a pact through which the international community should provide the necessary resources, in specific time frames, for the implementation of the

goals defined with the Haitian authorities, based upon a national consensus, in areas such as democratic governability, social and economic development, environmental protection and security.

The next re-evaluation of the assistance priorities agreed in the Interim Cooperation Framework, to be carried out by the new Haitian authorities, will be a valuable occasion for that purpose. We believe that in this long-term commitment, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Development Bank have a role to play equal to that of the United Nations. The OAS must be the executor for that approach so that the work carried out by MINUSTAH does not dissolve in the social and environmental deterioration, once the electoral enthusiasm passes.

I cannot conclude without stressing the important work performed by Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdés as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSTAH and thanking him for the efforts he has made since his appointment. He will surely be difficult to replace. My country believes that his successor should be a person with similar diplomatic, political and management skills, as well as broad experience in designing and implementing development programmes, resource mobilization, the strengthening of institutions and conflict resolution. Those are all important elements in Haiti's post-election stage.

Here today Peru reaffirms its commitment to the Haitian people and the new Haitian authorities to continue making its best efforts for Haiti to begin a clear democratic, economic and social recovery process. The American continent cannot allow a new crisis in Haiti. Therefore, we will maintain our commitment, determination and solidarity with our neighbour country.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Samuel R. Insanally, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guyana.

Mr. Insanally (Guyana): On 7 February 2006, the people of Haiti came together in surprising strength and against all odds to cast their votes for the restoration of democracy to their troubled land. It was an impressive display of civic pride and responsibility that brought fresh faith and hope for the future of Haiti. The Rio Group, on whose behalf I have the honour to speak today, applauds their determination and celebrates their triumph.

The Argentine Republic, as President of the Security Council, must be congratulated on its initiative to bring the situation in Haiti to this body for further deliberation. We are particularly pleased to see my Minister, colleague, presiding over this important meeting.

We also wish to commend the Secretary-General for his guidance of the collective effort to assist Haiti through a most difficult and challenging period in its recent history.

To the distinguished Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti, Mr. Juan Gabriel Valdés, we offer our appreciation for his leadership of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and acknowledge the pivotal role the Mission has played in the return to constitutional order in Haiti. His presentation today has certainly informed and inspired our own intervention in the debate.

We welcome most especially the presence in our midst today of the President-elect of Haiti, His Excellency Mr. René Préval. His participation in this forum is indicative of his willingness to engage and collaborate with the international community for the good of his country and its people. On behalf of the Rio Group, allow me to pledge to him our full support for the implementation of his mandate.

It is important that at this critical juncture in Haiti's history the international community give serious thought to how best it might assist Haiti — a country that for so long has been hobbled by poverty and conflict — to make a smooth transition to a stable and secure society, firmly embarked on the path to development.

As friends of Haiti, the countries of the Rio Group are encouraged by the successful conclusion of the recent electoral process to believe that a unique opportunity has been created for the establishment of peace and development in the country.

In our view, the future stability and viability of Haiti will depend in large measure on our collective ability to strengthen and entrench the foundations of democracy. Strong and effective institutions and machinery will have to be built to guarantee that the benefits of democracy are delivered to all the citizens of Haiti without regard to class, colour or creed.

Accordingly, our cooperation with Haiti must be designed to yield, among other things, an education system that is relevant to the particular needs of a largely Creole-speaking population, a strong police and judiciary to preserve law and order and, indeed, all the other basic services such as health and housing that are essential to a decent life.

Equally important, there must be a determined effort to eliminate the climate of fear and insecurity that now prevails in Haiti. The internecine violence that has long plagued that country cannot be tolerated if democracy is to survive. We note in this context that President-elect Préval has called for the continuation of MINUSTAH so that the democratic process can be preserved and consolidated. The Rio Group supports the retention of the Mission and would also urge that its mandate now be amply broadened to include a stronger humanitarian and development component. This more comprehensive approach, we believe, will not only improve the Mission's performance but will also enhance its credibility and prestige in the eyes not only of the Haitian people but of the international community.

Reducing poverty and creating incentives to economic growth are arguably among the most difficult challenges facing Haiti today. All who have witnessed the abject conditions of life in Cité Soleil and other deprived areas of Haiti cannot but be appalled by the misery that is allowed to exist today. The human development indicators of Haiti are well below the average of the other countries of the region, with a vast majority of Haitians living in poverty and with little or no access to adequate health care, education and public sanitation. The Rio Group is pleased to learn that a poverty reduction strategy will be put in place to enable Haiti to reach the Millennium Development Goals within the specified time frame.

As experience has also taught us, democratic elections alone cannot guarantee peace and development. To be truly effective, democracy must be nurtured and fortified through equitable economic and social development. The Rio Group is of the view that the early implementation of some key priority projects aimed at rapidly improving the standard of living of Haiti's poor will serve to alleviate the prevailing despair and give new hope to the nation for economic recovery and growth.

In this context, I may mention that several countries of the Rio Group have already established bilateral cooperation programmes with Haiti in areas of concern. At the level of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the heads of Government have already signalled their readiness to readmit Haiti into the Community's councils and to provide it with further material and technical support. We commend the United States, Canada, the European Union, other donor countries and international agencies that have contributed, within the Interim Cooperation Framework, to several development programmes. We urge other States and agencies in a position to do so to respond promptly and fully to Haiti's urgent requirements by making swift and generous disbursements of assistance to that country.

The successful transition to constitutional government that Haiti is now in the process of making is largely the result of a very close and productive partnership that has been developed between Haiti and the international community. We laud the determination and efforts of all Haitians at all levels to rise above their present circumstances. Similarly, we must acknowledge the contributions made by MINUSTAH, the Organization of American States, the Rio Group, CARICOM and other partners to the strengthening of the democratic process.

It is important and imperative that this partnership for Haiti now be renewed and reinvigorated to enable that stricken country to consolidate its recent gains and move forward to full development. As a well-known Haitian proverb says: "Men anpil chay pa lou" — many hands make the load lighter. Acting in concert we will be able, hopefully, to see and to restore to Haiti the pride and glory that were born of its early, heroic struggle for freedom and independence.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to welcome the Foreign Minister of the Argentine Republic to the Council to personally preside over today's important open debate. We would also like to welcome His Excellency the President-elect of Haiti, Mr. Préval, who has travelled here specifically to attend this meeting and make an important statement.

The situation of Haiti has been a focus of attention of the international community since the 1990s. Having lived through untold sufferings brought about by years of turmoil, the Haitian people yearn for

peace and stability. They participated in the elections with tremendous enthusiasm and used their ballots to express their strong political aspirations. The presidential election was successfully concluded after just one round of balloting, and the date for the second round of voting in parliamentary elections has been rescheduled. We can say that Haiti once again finds itself at a critical threshold of another important new stage in its history. The dawn of opportunity and hope is already in sight.

We all know clearly that the successful holding of the elections and the completion of the political transition process represent only the first step in Haiti's endeavours for peace and reconstruction. History has taught us that sticking to the track of peace and reconstruction is far more difficult, complicated and challenging than preparing and holding elections. This is the historical mission of the new Government of Haiti, and it also an issue to which the international community should give serious consideration.

To realize this goal, China believes that, first, genuine national reconciliation is the precondition for the restoration of Haiti's stability and development. All parties concerned in Haiti should carefully sum up experiences and lessons drawn from the first round of parliamentary elections and ensure the fairness and transparency of the second round, as well as of municipal and local elections, so as to establish trust and confidence in the population and all participating parties. Once elections are concluded, all parties and factions should respect the outcome of the elections, keep in mind the overall interest of the country, put aside their previous differences and engage in sincere political dialogue in an effort to achieve consensus and create a healthy political atmosphere for peace and reconstruction of their country.

Secondly, maintaining and improving the security situation will form the basis of peace and reconstruction in Haiti. In spite of recent improvements in the security situation, it seems that, for a considerable period of time, it will be difficult totally to eradicate factors affecting the stability and security of Haiti. The Haitian authorities should, on the one hand, work closely with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) forcefully to combat and deter illegal armed elements and criminals, and, on the other hand, to reform and restructure the police and judiciary, with the help of the international community, and effectively carry out disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

Thirdly, economic and social development is the key to eradicating the root causes of the turmoil in Haiti. As a least developed country, Haiti has long suffered from a paucity of infrastructure and substandard living conditions. The new Government of Haiti should mobilize all of its forces and concentrate its limited resources on quick-impact projects in order to improve people's daily lives and help generate employment opportunities. The people will start to have confidence in the future of their country only when they begin to enjoy real benefits. In that respect, the role of the international financial agencies and of the donor countries is essential. The relevant assistance commitments should be honoured as soon as possible, and emphasis should be put on quick-impact projects, so as to guarantee a good beginning for the reconstruction of Haiti.

Haiti is a country with extremely limited resources that is faced with numerous tasks. Whether Haiti can successfully avoid a relapse and proceed towards lasting peace and sustainable development will depend on the hard work of the people and the Government of Haiti as well as on the sustained attention and assistance of the international community. Latin American countries have always actively participated and played an important role in international assistance activities in Haiti, and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has recently decided to reinstate Haiti's membership. That kind of support is extremely important for Haiti's stability and development and for its reintegration into the international community.

There is an ancient Chinese proverb that says, "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime". I think that the international community, in providing help to Haiti, should heed its concerns and ideas, and enhance, on an ongoing basis, Haiti's sense of ownership in the reconstruction process, thus helping to revitalize the country. Given that the Peacebuilding Commission has been established and will start functioning soon, we should consider listing Haiti as one of the candidates for consideration by the Commission, in due time.

Although China does not have diplomatic relations with Haiti at the current time, the Chinese people have always had friendly ties with, and been

close to, the Haitian people. China believes that the Security Council should continue to watch closely the situation in Haiti and looks forward to the early submission by the Secretary-General, after consultations with Haitian leaders, of recommendations regarding the structure and mandate of MINUSTAH in the next stage. China also hopes that the political conditions necessary for MINUSTAH to stay on will continue to prevail.

We trust that, as an experienced statesman, Mr. Préval will live up to the high expectations of the Haitian people and the international community; address, in an appropriate manner, the various complicated and sensitive issues facing the country; and lead Haiti towards stability, development and prosperity.

Finally, the Chinese delegation endorses the presidential statement to be issued at the end of this meeting and thanks the Mission of Argentina for its diligent work in that regard.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is The Honourable Mr. Frederick A. Mitchell, Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Public Service of the Bahamas, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Mitchell (Bahamas): The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) appreciates the opportunity to participate in this debate, which is taking place during a critical phase in Haiti's transition to constitutional rule.

On 7 February 2006, after two years of calamitous trials, the people of Haiti in large numbers demonstrated their yearning to be governed by persons of their choice. The tremendous courage, determination, discipline and patience they displayed in exercising their franchise is commendable and underscores the importance of democracy for the Haitian people. The member States of CARICOM congratulate Mr. René Préval on his election to the post of President of the Republic.

There is no room, however, to be complacent about the process that led to this result; the electoral season in Haiti has not yet ended. Every effort must be made by all involved to rectify the organizational shortcomings which bedevilled the presidential and legislative elections of 7 February and which have led to the delay of the second round, as well as to the postponement of the inauguration of the President-elect. The attachment of the people of Haiti to the democratic process demands no less.

Similarly, the preservation of the integrity of the electoral process is of paramount importance for the legitimacy of the new Government, the future stability of the country and the development of Haitian society. The importance of the local and municipal elections — essential building blocks in Haiti's constitutional system of democratic governance — should not be allowed to fade from our awareness.

In the past, the Caribbean Community has offered its own electoral expertise, and it takes this opportunity to reiterate its offer. It is ready, and intends, to field once again an electoral observation mission for the second round of the legislative elections and for the local government elections, in company with other international support groups.

The principled position adopted by CARICOM two years ago is well known. We were of the view that the fundamental tenets of democratic practice and behaviour had been compromised in the process of seeking a resolution to the Haitian political impasse. As the Caribbean Community emphasized in this very Chamber during the debate of 12 January 2005 on the situation in Haiti, "We cannot vacillate on principles since they are essential to our security as small States." *(S/PV.5110, p.16)*

From the outset, the Caribbean Community indicated its willingness to welcome the return of Haiti to its Councils once constitutional rule had been restored. In his recent letter of congratulations to the President-elect, Mr. René Préval, the CARICOM Chairman intimated that that process was well on the way to being achieved, since President-elect Préval's victory

> "opens the path to the re-engagement of Haiti at the highest levels of the Councils of the Community, given the all-embracing endorsement of [his] election as a reflection of the will of the people".

The Chairman also emphasized that the Caribbean Community stands ready to accompany the Government and the people of Haiti as they confront the many challenges facing them in their quest for the sustained political, economic and social development of their country.

In that regard, the Community proposes to meet soon with the President-elect to better determine how best it can contribute, and continue to make good, on its commitment to the people of Haiti.

Reconciliation, bridge-building, compromise and respect for one another must become key elements of a new Haitian ethos and polity, if the people of Haiti are to overcome the deep social and political divides which have historically impeded progress; if Haiti is to rise to the multiple, complex and deep-seated challenges that await; if the country is to find consensus on the direction it must take in order to grasp the opportunity of transformation. Towards that end, the Interim Administration has a primary rule of law obligation to fulfil before relinquishing office, as well as an opportunity full of symbolic resonance to contribute to the new dawn by bringing to urgent completion the judicial processes that will ensure the release of the numerous persons arrested arbitrarily and kept in detention without legal justification or adjudication over the past two years.

Helping Haiti to overcome the difficulties it previously experienced in seeking to become an integral part of the Caribbean Community will constitute a priority for CARICOM in its assistance to Haiti. An important aspect of that effort will involve facilitating the smooth integration of Haiti into the various programmes and institutions that coordinate and underpin the functioning of the Community. With the green light of the new constitutional authorities, the Community will also seek to build on the activities it set in train during the transition period in the areas of institutional development for the establishment of a permanent electoral council; completion of a study, with recommendations, of Haiti's energy and fuel needs; an academic conference on the transition to democracy bringing together the region's universities; and the provision of French translations of key CARICOM documents of a technical nature. CARICOM's contribution will be constrained only by lack of resources and not by a shortage of political will.

The road ahead for Haiti will be long and difficult. Building democracy and creating the conditions for stability and for social, political and economic development will require the dedicated engagement of the Haitian Government and people. A long-term horizon of commitment from the international community will also be required. In that connection, the support in the field provided to Haiti by the United Nations peacekeeping Mission and its key contributing nations, the Organization of American States and the donor community must be commended, as must the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Haiti is a small but complex society. The nature of the problems to be overcome is such that expectations on all sides, Haitian and international, should be tempered and should remain realistic. Success may have to be measured in small increments. However, the opportunity for Haiti to move from instability and deprivation to peace and development is once again present, and it should not be lost.

Mr. Gayama (Congo) (*spoke in French*): It is indeed a pleasure and an honour for the Security Council to welcome to the Chamber His Excellency Mr. René Préval, President-elect of the Republic of Haiti, who has just provided us with a very informative statement on the current situation in Haiti. On behalf of the Congolese delegation, I am pleased to convey to him our heartfelt congratulations and most sincere wishes for success in the discharge of his important new responsibilities.

The history of Haiti is replete with remarkable events of unique human and historical importance. On 1 January 1804, Haiti became the second country of the American continent, after the United States, to declare its independence, thereby playing a pioneering role in the process of liberating peoples in what is usually referred to as the new world, namely, the Americas. Haiti is linked to Africa by memories of a common history that involved unimaginable ordeals. Africa in general, and the Congo in particular, are therefore concerned whenever Haiti finds itself in difficulty, and thus wish to demonstrate their solidarity in any way they can.

The situation in Haiti in recent years has been characterized by a series of stages requiring special attention from the international community as a result of their seriousness. A public administration that has largely been destroyed, a judicial system that has been significantly weakened, a legislature that has broken down as a result of an unreliable electoral system, great insecurity caused by armed groups and, lastly, major economic and social problems which have led to enormous distress and frustration for the people of

Haiti, especially its young people — that is generally the scenario in Haiti today.

We are pleased that the Security Council has spared no effort in helping Haiti by adopting the various resolutions that established the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and defined its role. We would like to take this opportunity to commend the decisive efforts and role of MINUSTAH, under the admirable leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Juan Gabriel Valdés, during the electoral process. We also wish to express our appreciation to the Organization of American States and to the other regional and international partners who have recently provided crucial support to the Transitional Government and the Provisional Electoral Council.

In that connection, allow me to pay tribute to the Provisional Electoral Council, whose efforts have contributed to the success of the elections. Clearly, the new Government will work to strengthen the Council in order to make it permanent and consolidate the progress made thus far. We also wish to reaffirm the importance of holding, in the coming days, the second round of parliamentary elections, as well as the municipal and local elections, which will constitute the pillars of democratic governance in Haiti.

While commending the efforts made by the Government of Mr. Gérard Latortue during the transition period, we must not overlook the achievements of the Haitian people themselves, who, through their broad participation in the electoral process, demonstrated their commitment to change, and, in a peaceful manner, entrusted Mr. René Préval with a mandate to bring peace and sustainable development to the country. The President has thus been called upon to place his country on the path towards the restoration of lasting peace, growth and national reconciliation by drawing upon the momentum generated by the recent elections and the popular support he has received.

There can be no lasting peace in Haiti without real prospects for growth; nor will there be development in that country without national security, stability and reconciliation. In that connection, it will be important for the new Government to re-establish its authority throughout the country as soon as possible. International assistance will be necessary initially; but the efforts of the Haitian authorities, like those of international actors, must be aimed at ensuring that the administrative and security systems resume their roles in every city, town and community in Haiti. My delegation therefore believes that it is crucial to provide assistance to the new democratic institutions, including the Parliament — which will definitely require a period of adjustment — and the municipalities, territorial collectives and other State structures. Haiti will also need support in the judicial area, as well as in the professionalization of the police.

The country will in particular require a comprehensive development plan to combat poverty, unemployment and social inequality. As Mr. Latortue emphasized when he addressed the Council, Haiti

> "will need fewer military personnel but many more engineers — many more men and women dedicated to solving the problems of economic and social development. I wish to reiterate what many others have said before me: the root cause of the problems of instability in Haiti does not have only military solutions. We must search for the deep-rooted cause of instability in the poverty, unemployment and social inequality that exist in Haiti." (*S/PV.5377, p. 5*)

We welcome the fact that all donors at the World Bank meeting held in Washington on 21 February last recognized the need to establish a programme to support democracy in Haiti after the elections.

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our support for continuing the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, in accordance with resolution 1658 (2006) of 14 February. We would encourage President-elect René Préval to foster a climate of dialogue that brings together all political actors in a spirit of national reconciliation, in order that they may work together to achieve development for Haiti and promote the well-being of its people. The international community must henceforth be encouraged to support the efforts of the new Government and to extend to it its full cooperation. We emphatically call for such support.

The international community must therefore consider developing a genuine and dynamic long-term partnership with Haiti to ensure the effectiveness of the efforts of all stakeholders. Through that momentum the people of Haiti will be given real prospects for economic and social development and for the reduction

of poverty and injustice so as to promote true democracy.

I would like to conclude by stating that the Haitian people have a bright future before them. That future is in their hands: it belongs to them. They can bring about a real renaissance. Likewise, on both the bilateral and multilateral levels, we call on the international community to assist the people of Haiti while respecting their particular characteristics and the sovereignty of their country and institutions.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, His Excellency Mr. Carlos Morales Troncoso, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Morales Troncoso (*spoke in Spanish*): We have come to the Security Council today at the generous invitation of its President, who opted to take advantage of his successful presidency to convene this open debate on the situation in Haiti. On behalf of my country, I would like to express to you, Mr. President, my warmest congratulations for this initiative, which we applaud and commend as a welcome and timely one. Allow me to extend my country's congratulations to the President-elect of Haiti, Mr. René Garcia Préval, and to reiterate the commitment of our President, Mr. Leonel Fernández Reyna, and of all of us, to contribute to the efforts that Haitian society and the international community are making to promote institutional development and economic and political stability in Haiti.

We have seen as a promising sign the fact that the President-elect of Haiti, Mr. René Préval, chose our country to make his first goodwill visit abroad after his election. We reiterate once again the firm commitment of our country, the Dominican Republic, to raise in every forum to which it is invited the issue of Haiti's urgent need for solidarity on the part of the international community.

We have to acknowledge the fact that the attention paid by the international community, led by the United Nations, to the strife in that nation is already starting to bear fruit. I would like also to take this opportunity to join in the expressions of congratulation and to praise the work that has been done by our great friend, Mr. Juan Gabriel Valdés, Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

We have seen the formation of a group of donor countries and institutions that have made a commitment to providing Haiti with resources for institutional revitalization and to rehabilitate and build the infrastructures that are essential to revitalize the economy and guarantee basic public services for the country and for the population as a whole. We have also seen a long-term commitment to helping the Haitian people and leadership to institutionalize democracy and to lay the foundations for sustainable economic development. The work done by the military forces of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) has made it possible to control public order, enabling the Transitional Government to function and allowing the organization and holding of free elections.

There are four other crucial questions. The first involves alerting the elected authorities to the need to incorporate, as they have been doing, all political movements in the effort to stabilize the country and, in the process, to restore democracy, reduce poverty and to seek the social consensus necessary to ensure dialogue and solidarity. Secondly, there is a need to view assistance to Haiti as a process that involves the leaders of every sector of society and the Haitian community as a whole, so that they can feel truly committed to the institutional, physical, political, economic and social recovery of their country. Thirdly, the Organization must maintain MINUSTAH's military forces in Haiti for as long as necessary, until a climate of public safety is restored and the Haitian authorities can effectively assume their duties. Fourthly, we join in a call to Haiti's creditor countries to take the decisive step of forgiving its debt so as to lift that tremendous burden on the country's depleted public finances.

To conclude, I heard today from the Ambassador of the Congo that Haiti is the second oldest nation in the hemisphere, dating back to 1 January 1804. Haiti has enough historic and patriotic spirit to give rise to optimism with respect to its overcoming the many calamitous difficulties afflicting the Haitian people.

We would also like to propose the establishment, under the Government of President René Garcia Préval, of a commission made up of representatives of friendly countries, international institutions and non-governmental organizations, among others, that would cooperate with the authorities in developing and following up on projects for the economic and social reconstruction of Haiti. The primary objective of such

a commission would be to ensure the disbursement of the remaining 74 per cent of the $1.085 billion collected at the donor conference in July 2004, and to establish priorities among initiatives that would have an immediate impact on job creation.

In this respect, we are ready, as we said to President-elect Préval, to reactivate, as soon as possible, the joint bilateral Dominican-Haitian commission as a body for consultation on and discussion of all of the issues that concern our relationship. We are also ready to work together with the new Haitian Government on common issues relating to environmental protection, migration, trade regulation, business exchanges and border security.

Mr. Bolton (United States of America): I would like to welcome President-elect Préval to New York, and I look forward to his visit in Washington tomorrow.

Haiti has made great strides forward over the last year. On 7 February, millions of Haitians went to the polls. More than 60 per cent of registered voters cast their ballots and voted for new, democratic leadership. This was a great day for Haiti and for the many nations that have supported Haiti's return to democracy.

President-elect Préval now has a clear opportunity to lead the Haitian people into a brighter future. We have heard his call for continued support from the international community, and my Government is committed to helping the Haitian people move down that road to democracy. By the end of 2006, the United States will have committed nearly half a billion dollars to Haiti's reconstruction and return to democracy since the Interim Cooperation Framework began in July 2004. Many other donors have been generous as well, but Haiti will still need robust assistance for the next decade to address its many challenges in achieving a stable democracy and creating sustainable economic growth. My Government looks forward to the next pledging conference this summer, and I am confident that that conference will show the international community's continued generosity.

The Haitian people have great expectations of their new leader, as does the international community. We take Mr. Préval's assurances to heart that his Government will be inclusive, broad-based and work to respond to the aspirations of all Haiti's citizens. With the presidential election completed and run-off legislative elections scheduled for 21 April, Haitian authorities, with support from the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the Organization of American States (OAS), should redouble their efforts to hold timely local and municipal elections, which are critical to the democratization process.

Essential government services at the local level are a foundation of governance in Haiti and the starting point for the selection of the Supreme Court and the Permanent Electoral Council.

The logistical and financial issues that affected the first round of elections should not hinder local elections. The United States is prepared to do its part, and we call on the international community to contribute as well.

The United States salutes the contributions made to MINUSTAH by a variety of partners in this hemisphere and around the world, and we pay particular tribute to the leadership of Brazil and Canada. While the security situation has improved significantly in recent months, MINUSTAH should redouble its efforts to maintain a secure environment, particularly in conflict-ridden neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince such as Cité Soleil.

Beyond immediate stabilization, however, the Council is right to focus on the vital task of preparing the Haitian Government to face security challenges on its own. The United States reiterates its support for the development and reform of the Haitian national police. We call upon President-elect Préval's Government to cooperate fully with MINUSTAH to vet and train both new recruits and current officers. The professionalization of the police force alone is not enough; the justice system must also be strengthened. All the challenges cannot be addressed overnight, but we are already seeing promising signs. In particular, I would like to commend the leadership of Haitian national police Director-General Mario Andrésol.

While addressing lawlessness, we should also address the lack of basic services and insecurity. The Bel Air model of stabilization — a civilian-military effort between the Brazilian contingent of MINUSTAH and the United States Agency for International Development to provide jobs, training and public works projects that improve the lives of Bel Air's residents — can serve as a model for bringing security and development to Haiti's most conflict-ridden areas.

The United States remains fully committed to ensuring that the necessary work is accomplished to eliminate obstacles along Haiti's path. We also understand that it is ultimately the responsibility of the Government and the people of Haiti to consolidate real and lasting democratic reform.

Mr. Denisov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I am pleased to see you, Mr. Minister, presiding over the Security Council. I welcome the presence of the President-elect of Haiti, Mr. Préval. I congratulate him on his electoral victory and wish him every success in his efforts to improve the lives of all Haitians. We also welcome other participants, our eminent guests and the briefings given at today's meeting

We regard as generally successful the first round of national elections in Haiti, which are intended to restore constitutional law and order in the country. We expect that the Haitian Government, drawing upon appropriate international support, will do everything possible to ensure that the second round of legislative elections and the subsequent local government elections take place in accordance with democratic norms and standards and within the planned time frame.

It is essential that all political forces in Haiti accept the outcome of the forthcoming elections, in the interests of promoting the political process over the long term. In the post-election period, all political forces in Haiti, guided by the country's vital interests, must work more actively to promote national conciliation and political dialogue and to strengthen State institutions.

If there is to be long-term stabilization of the situation in Haiti, reform of the law enforcement structures is key. It is particularly important that we promptly implement the framework plan for reforming the Haitian police in order to create an effective and functional police service. If that plan is to be implemented, there must be greater interaction between the national police and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

Despite the great importance of international assistance to Haiti, the primary responsibility for strengthening stability and advancing the peace process continues to lie with the Haitians themselves. Without true desire or energetic efforts on the part of the Haitian people to improve daily life in their country, a long-term positive outcome in Haiti will not be possible. The new Haitian leadership has the main responsibility for engaging in productive cooperation with the international community.

In that connection, we commend the efforts of MINUSTAH and its head, Mr. Valdés, whom we thank for his briefing today. In particular, we note the Mission's important role in successfully organizing and holding the first round of national elections. We pay tribute to all peacekeepers who have given their lives for the cause of peace in Haiti. We are also grateful to the Argentine delegation and to the Group of Friends of Haiti for the draft Security Council presidential statement, which we fully support.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is His Excellency Mr. Alberto van Klaveren, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile.

Mr. van Klaveren (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Chile wishes to thank the Argentine Republic, in particular the President of the Security Council, Minister Jorge Taiana, for the initiative to convene this open debate on a subject that is important for the region and arouses the interest of the international community. We value in particular the presence of Mr. René Garcia Préval, President-elect of Haiti, whom we recently welcomed to Chile for the swearing-in of President Michel'e Bachelet. We express once again our sincerest congratulations to the Haitian people on the election results of 7 February. We also wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdés, for his comprehensive briefing and for his efforts at the head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

The holding of the elections, with the efficient efforts and support of the Organization of American States, attests to the commitment of the Haitian people to the democratic political process, the establishment of the rule of law and the promotion of national reconciliation, which are the only means to achieve long-term stability. If the electoral process is to conclude successfully, it is necessary to ensure that the second round of parliamentary elections is carried out under equally democratic conditions and in a timely manner. That is undoubtedly a priority objective so that the President-elect can promptly assume his duties as the leader of Haiti. The holding of municipal and local

elections to establish provincial governments will also make it possible to strengthen the country's democratic institutions.

It has now been more than two years since Chile, aware that it was imperative to avoid a humanitarian tragedy and responding promptly to the call made by the Security Council, was incorporated into the multinational interim force and immediately joined MINUSTAH. We did so with the understanding that only a comprehensive and multidimensional peacekeeping operation would make possible the country's political, social and economic rehabilitation. Here, we wish to reaffirm that commitment in the conviction that the Haitian people now have the possibility of controlling their own destiny.

That depends on two basic conditions. First, Haitian society must renounce all forms of violence, and more forums must be created on a daily basis for an inclusive dialogue to promote understanding among the various political and social sectors. That is the way to begin institutional reforms that will make it possible to lay the foundations for good government and sustainable economic development.

Secondly, the international community must contribute development programmes aimed primarily at fighting extreme poverty, chronic diseases, the lack of infrastructure and environmental degradation. To do that, it will be essential to disburse, with flexibility and urgency, all the funds committed to the Interim Cooperation Framework, as well as to increase local and foreign investment and to generate new sources of employment, particularly for young people. In this new phase, MINUSTAH must continue to support the Haitian authorities so as to maintain a safe and stable environment in the country. It will also be essential to continue to support actions that facilitate the comprehensive reconstruction process.

During that entire time, Chile has focused its cooperation on concrete development objectives. We have contributed a corps of engineers, which includes Ecuadorian personnel, that is working on the installation of a mechanical bridge at Grand-Goâve.

Our country has also made additional efforts to increase the capabilities of our helicopters, equipping them with the gear necessary for nocturnal flights in order to improve surveillance capacity, which was a very important factor in the electoral process. The Chile battalion, which is assigned to Cap Haitien, has done effective work to ensure the security of the local population.

We consider it vital to contribute to the improvement of the national police, so that it can be consolidated as a professional, depoliticized entity. In that connection, we deem it relevant to consider the establishment of an international police academy headquartered in Port-au-Prince, whose main goal would be to train police officers specializing in post-conflict work.

The reform, modernization and strengthening of the judicial and penal system is also an urgent task that requires technical and financial assistance to the institutions supporting the rule of law. That is essential in order to guarantee absolute respect for human rights, an end to impunity and compliance with the norms of due process.

Likewise, we urge the new Haitian authorities to implement an effective policy for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all armed groups. That is, of course, dependent on the establishment of security guarantees and on the creation of jobs that can help to meet the basic needs of those who lay down their arms and of their families.

The progress made in the process of achieving an inclusive democratic transition is for us cause for optimism. Haiti is beginning a new phase in which the continued presence of the United Nations will play a key role in the consolidation of the democratic regime and of lasting peace.

Haiti offers the United Nations a symbolic opportunity to implement the new institutions agreed to under the reform and that seek to incorporate socio-economic dimensions as essential elements of a sustainable solution to the crisis. That is a response to the demands of a modern-day and effective multilateralism.

The case of Haiti must be among the first to be considered by the Peacebuilding Commission. The effort that the Haitian people are responsibly making demands renewed solidarity. Its institutional and economic reconstruction requires political will on the part of an international community committed to the challenges, dreams, and hopes of 10 million Haitians, who aspire to live in conditions of dignity and liberty.

Chile will continue to make all the necessary efforts in order to realize those lofty goals.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to thank you for having convened this important meeting. Allow me also to welcome the participation of Mr. René Préval, President-elect of Haiti.

The electoral process in Haiti is undoubtedly a first step towards the strengthening of democratic institutions and the promotion of the rule of law and good governance, which must be followed by other equally important steps on the road to achieving national reconciliation and building national unity, which cannot be attained without the participation of all Haitians.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Préval on his election as President-elect of Haiti, and also to congratulate the people of Haiti for the success of the electoral process that took place on 7 February 2006. We eagerly look forward to the completion of the second round of elections on time, in order to form a national Government that is able to build peace in keeping with the hopes and aspirations of the Haitian people.

Providing the necessary support for peacebuilding activities will play a crucial role in guaranteeing long-term stability and ensuring the welfare of the Haitian people. In the next phase, a number of issues must to be addressed. Those include the disarmament of former combatants and their demobilization and reintegration into society; the restoration and rehabilitation of the security sector, and rebuilding the national police force to effectively enforce the rule of law; ensuring that justice is upheld, through promotion of the judiciary and respect for human rights; the creation of jobs; and rebuilding an active national civil administration able to provide basic public services such as water, energy, health care, education and infrastructure.

In order to succeed in all those areas, we must consider the past and benefit from the lessons learned in building a State with institutions that focus first on national interests. We believe it is reasonable for the elected Government to benefit from the support of the United Nations, since the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), as ably led by Mr. Valdés, as well as other United Nations agencies, have played a crucial role in the progress achieved so far in the areas of stability and the provision of basic services. MINUSTAH is generally considered an indispensable help to the new Government, and its presence has had a great effect on security and the monitoring of the electoral process. In the next stage, it will ensure further assessment of the situation when the new administration takes office in Haiti.

The Haitian people now look to their new Government with a great deal of confidence, as reflected in the results of the election. We hope that the new Administration will be able to discharge the responsibilities it has been given and the difficult tasks that await it, and that stability will return to that country, which has suffered too long from internal turmoil.

Finally, we support the adoption of the draft presidential statement on the situation in Haiti that is before the Council.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): The delegation of Japan warmly welcomes the presence of the President-elect of the Republic of Haiti, Mr. René Préval, in this Chamber today, and we express our sincere congratulations to him on his election.

Today's debate provides a timely occasion to discuss how the United Nations and the international community can assist Haiti at such a crucial time in its recent history, as the country strives forward in its quest for peace and stability, national reconciliation and economic and social development.

We thank Argentina for having taken a leadership role on the issue of Haiti in the Security Council during past weeks and for having organized the meeting. We appreciate the fact, Mr. President, that you are guiding our deliberations.

Although the conduct of the general elections in February was not without some troubles, it was completed successfully overall. We commend the Haitian people on that remarkable achievement.

While the elections were a major gain towards restoring democracy and stability in Haiti, the fact remains that the country faces formidable challenges that President-elect Préval and future Governments will have to address in order to recover from conflict and make strides towards nation-building and sustainable development.

The most important and pressing of those problems will be to find a way to achieve inclusive national reconciliation. To that end, it is hoped that the

successful conduct of the February elections will pave the way for a peaceful electoral process in the second round of parliamentary elections, in April. The results of those elections will have to be accepted by all parties, and conditions should be created by which all the political parties elected to the Parliament will be able to participate in the political processes in a free and democratic way. Any attempt to isolate or seclude elected parties from the proper decision-making processes would be destabilizing and should be avoided, in the interest of preventing the recurrence of violence, regaining stability in the country and advancing national reconciliation with inclusiveness.

Secondly, national institution- and capacity-building, including in particular reform of the national police and of the judicial system, continues to be a major challenge for Haiti. The security situation remains fragile. Unless it is addressed promptly and effectively, it could lead to serious problems. Although some progress has been made in registering and training Haitian police officers, the Government needs more vigorous reform efforts in that area in order to strengthen the rule of law. Capacity-building and the rehabilitation of national institutions, including the national police and the judicial system, should therefore be high on the list of priority activities of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). In our view, the review of the MINUSTAH mandate should appropriately reflect that.

Haiti will be an important test case in peacebuilding. We should make every effort to ensure that this will be another success story of a country in transition, as well as of peacebuilding. For that to happen it is essential that the people of Haiti feel the tangible benefits of peace through the economic and social development of their society, together with institutional capacity-building. That requires international support and assistance in both the long and short terms, including quick-impact projects. Ensuring speedy and steady implementation of the projects pledged in the context of the process of the Interim Cooperation Framework will be critical.

To that end, we commend President-elect Préval for his many efforts to gain support from the countries of the region and the wider international community and to lay the necessary groundwork for the incoming Government. The international community should respond generously to Haiti's needs with the necessary assistance, as regards both immediate and longer-term needs.

For our part, Japan has provided assistance to Haiti in the area of humanitarian aid and electoral assistance. Japan will continue to be a partner in humanitarian development assistance for Haiti, in full respect of the importance of the concept of ownership by the Haitian people of the development process. We look forward to working closely with the new Government and the people of Haiti in support of their nation-building efforts.

Let me conclude by paying tribute to the contribution of Mr. Juan Gabriel Valdés, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti. Our appreciation also goes to MINUSTAH and its troop and police contributors, who have done a good job in discharging the Mission's important duties under especially difficult circumstances.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this public meeting. We commend your initiative and leadership in addressing the issue of Haiti in the Security Council. We also thank Mr. Valdés for his observations. We commend his excellent work as the Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

My delegation welcomes the presence at this meeting of His Excellency Mr. René Préval, President-elect of Haiti. We also welcome his important contribution to our debate. Allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate him on his election and to wish him, on behalf of my Government, every success in the future in his important work.

As the Permanent Representative of Austria will make a statement on behalf of the European Union shortly, and as Slovakia fully associates itself with that statement, I will make only a few brief additional comments.

We applaud the people of Haiti for their continuing commitment to democracy, as reflected in the record turnout in the first round of presidential and parliamentary elections. At the same time, we would like to underscore the importance of completing the electoral cycle, including by holding local and municipal elections in the same manner and spirit.

We agree with the Secretary-General's stressing that the completion of the elections will be only the first step in the political transition process. The newly

elected Government of Haiti will have to address many formidable challenges to consolidate democratic processes. Those challenges include weak State and local institutions, insufficient administrative infrastructure, deep poverty, violent gangs and a flourishing trade in drugs and money-laundering.

Haiti will need further international support and assistance to cope with those problems. In that regard, my delegation expresses its full support for MINUSTAH's continued role in Haiti to ensure security, reinforce democracy and support the implementation of civil-service, public-administration and security-sector reform, as well as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes in the country.

At the same time, we believe that only the people of Haiti themselves can solve the problems of their country. Haitian ownership and leadership in rebuilding Haiti are indispensable for the success of the country's transition. Inclusive national dialogue and reconciliation are, in our view, the most important priorities and imperatives for launching the long-term process of transformation. We urge the political leaders of Haiti to seize this important window of opportunity and translate it into concrete actions.

Long-term development challenges lie ahead in Haiti. There are also immediate humanitarian needs that, if not urgently addressed, could well imperil the frail stability in the country. They have to do with improving the most basic social services, including education and health care, as well as the deplorable economic conditions of the vast majority of Haiti's people. In that regard, special attention should be paid to the grave situation of the thousands of street children forced to fight in gangs or to become part of a subculture of bonded servitude. Success in addressing those urgent problems is contingent upon immediate and durable donor support and upon close coordination among all stakeholders.

The long-term part of Haiti's struggle for stability, normalcy and development should be based on democratic institution-building, good governance and strengthening respect for human rights and the rule of law. Democratic institutions are essential to ensuring political stability and are basic foundations of economic growth.

An atmosphere of calm and security must return to the country. We agree with Mr. Valdés that a particular priority in that area is to strengthen Haiti's judicial and law enforcement institutions. Effective judicial reform in Haiti will be a long-term project. It must start, first of all, with the training of a new generation of judges and qualified personnel, and with their speedy integration into the system. We are encouraged by the commitment of the newly elected President to a well-trained and depoliticized police force. The reform of the national police, which at present is dangerously understaffed and ill-equipped, is imperative in efficiently fighting criminality, disarming violent groups, restoring domestic law and order and protecting the people of Haiti.

Last but not least, in our opinion, Haiti's participation in regional cooperation and integration, including building confidence with its neighbours, will also be important in the process of successful transition. In that context, we welcome the readiness of the Caribbean Community to readmit Haiti into the Community's councils.

Cooperation with the Dominican Republic to implement measures to better manage security along the border will be key to effectively combating trafficking in arms and drugs in Haiti, as well as to fighting organized crime in general. In this regard, we welcome the positive signs in relations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, including reactivation of the Haitian-Dominican mixed commission.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that Slovakia is ready to share its experience from its own successful transformation with the new Government of Haiti and assist it in asserting its legitimacy and in promoting good governance at all levels.

My delegation supports the adoption of the draft presidential statement and commends the delegation of Argentina for having elaborated it.

Nana Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): Mr. President, at the outset, let me express my delegation's gratitude to you for convening and presiding over this meeting.

It is with great pleasure and a deep sense of solidarity that my delegation joins the other members of the Security Council in welcoming the President-elect of the Republic of Haiti, Mr. René Garcia Préval, whom I wish to congratulate on his victory in the 7 February presidential elections — a victory in which all Haitians have a stake. We commend him particularly for the statesmanship he demonstrated

throughout the elections. This greatly helped to keep the process of democratization in Haiti on track. Above all, his ascendance to the presidency, for the second time in a decade, presents him with a unique opportunity to heal age-old wounds in order to reconcile the nation and rally Haitians behind him for the urgent task of national reconstruction.

Unless the cycle of violence and political instability is overcome, democracy and meaningful development will continue to elude Haiti. It is our hope, therefore, that the Government that emerges finally will reflect a collective determination to evolve a new political culture of inclusiveness that transcends the sharp social and economic divisions that have been the bane of Haiti's progress over the years.

We look forward to a peaceful second round of parliamentary elections that has been scheduled for 21 April 2006. This should bring the elections to a successful conclusion, for which the Provisional Electoral Council, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the donors who provided resources deserve our highest commendation. At this juncture, I would like to thank my old friend and former colleague, Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdés, for his untiring efforts in the cause of peace in Haiti.

By the end of April, the President and Parliament will have been inaugurated into office to begin the arduous task of transforming Haiti into a more united, stable and prosperous country. We know from our modest experience in Ghana as a young democracy that the momentum for turning away from the turbulent politics of the past derives from a strong national consensus in favour of democratic governance. The huge turnout at the elections has shown clearly that such a consensus does indeed exist within Haitian society.

Giving this consensus for democratic governance practical meaning for the ordinary citizen is a major challenge. It is our hope that the outcome of the June local and municipal elections will bring government to the doorstep of the people. No system of governance can retain its credibility before the people unless it enables them, at the very least, to meet their basic needs for survival.

The newly elected Government of Haiti must therefore be assisted in building a credible democracy capable of delivering to the population greater security of life and property, as well as sustainable access to potable water, electricity, education, health services and, above all, jobs. Among the various pressing demands, the restructuring of the Haitian national police and judicial system must be accorded utmost priority so as to enhance law and order and overall stability.

Time and again, the international community has been confronted with the grim underlying reality of most of the conflicts in which we have had to intervene at such great cost. We have learned that peace and stability invariably can be guaranteed most effectively by a system of governance that takes care of the basic needs of the people. Haiti is no different. Haitians are the architects of their own future. But given the endemic poverty in that country and its monumental economic and social problems, in the post-election period the international community, in partnership with the Government and people of Haiti, should embark upon a massive programme of national reconstruction. By drawing on the accumulated wisdom of our collective experience, we can help transform Haiti. We hope that at the appropriate time MINUSTAH's mandate will be refashioned to enable it to play a leading role in such an undertaking.

We thank the Argentine delegation for the draft presidential statement, which we fully support.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): We thank the delegation of Argentina for organizing this public debate on Haiti, and we thank you, Honourable Minister, for presiding over this session. My delegation joins in welcoming the President-elect of Haiti, His Excellency Mr. René Préval, to the Security Council. We thank him for his profound address.

We congratulate Mr. Préval on his electoral victory and commend the people of Haiti for expressing their democratic vote of confidence in him during the presidential and parliamentary elections of 7 February 2006. We urge the people of Haiti to maintain similar calm as they wait to complete the second round of legislative elections and subsequent local elections to complete successfully the political transition and usher in a democratic dispensation. In the intervening period, it is necessary to maintain the momentum in the electoral process in terms of voters' interest, hopes and aspirations.

We commend the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and its Head, the

Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdés. We also commend the Haitian electoral board, the troop-contributing countries, Haiti's neighbours and all of its friends for their collective efforts to organize and supervise what turned out to be free, fair and credible elections. The successful experience of last month should augur well for the second round of elections next month.

The cyclical political instability and natural calamities that have ravaged Haiti in the past few decades are inseparable from the poverty that is entrenched in that country. This latest international effort to give Haiti yet another fresh start must be a lessons-learned undertaking of past pitfalls and their underlying causes. The democratic elections should be the entry and starting point for comprehensive and irreversible change. The political, judicial and governance institutions must be revamped, while simultaneously addressing the chronic social and economic poverty of the Haitian people.

The international community, including the United Nations, must have a long-term, coordinated commitment to Haiti. There must be a conscious effort to invest in the political stability, governance structures and social and economic infrastructure before we can expect private enterprise to be attracted to invest in Haiti. We must avoid the mistakes of the past, when international involvement was selective, ad hoc and short term. It is imperative, therefore, that the post-electoral mandate of MINUSTAH is re-defined to set the stage for coordinated peacebuilding in all the vital sectors.

We look forward to the formation of a responsive Parliament, a committed Cabinet and a dedicated Prime Minister, a team that will put service to the people and their needs at the top of the list of priorities. They should start working immediately on national reconciliation, respect for human rights, enforcement of the rule of law, social and economic regeneration and constructive engagement with international partners.

We are pleased to note that the security situation in Haiti is already showing signs of improvement. Instances of kidnapping have gone down tremendously since the election of Mr. Préval as President of Haiti. The integration of former soldiers should continue to receive due attention to address misguided discontent, which can again become a destabilizing factor.

Finally, we thank the delegation of Argentina for the draft presidential statement, which we support.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): It is a pleasure for me to welcome Mr. René Préval, the new President of Haiti, and to congratulate him on his election, which reflects an undisputed choice of the Haitian people. We listened to his statement attentively, and we wish him every success in his new duties. We assure him of our full support in the many challenges that he will have to meet.

I fully subscribe to the statement to be made by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union. Here, I shall make a few supplementary comments.

The massive participation of Haitians during the presidential election and the peaceful holding of the first round of parliamentary elections are an important step forward on the path towards democracy in Haiti. In particular, they are an opportunity for Haiti to leave behind the violence and political instability of the past. The Haitian authorities must now work to promote reconciliation and an inclusive political process, in keeping with the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the population.

I should like to commend the role played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Valdés, and by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in that success. Mr. Valdés succeeded in bringing the Haitian political actors together, thus enabling MINUSTAH to succeed in its primary task: ensuring the country's political transition.

However, this is only the end of the first phase, and the challenges to be addressed are still immense. The long-term commitment of the international community, beginning with the United Nations, must be maintained. MINUSTAH will have to adjust its mandate accordingly, and we will be grateful to the Secretary-General for the recommendations that he will give us and the new Haitian authorities in that regard.

I should now like to refer briefly to the challenges that we believe will be most urgent in the coming months.

The first is to complete the political transition. The second round of parliamentary elections must be held as scheduled. The Haitian authorities and the Provisional Electoral Council, with the support of the

international community, need to ensure a transparent process that makes it possible to obtain indisputable results. The President must be able to swiftly take the oath of office before the new Parliament, in accordance with the constitutional rules.

In addition, much remains to be done to restore security in Haiti, despite the progress made in recent weeks. The continued existence of lawless areas has a very negative psychological impact on all the residents of Haiti and is a threat to the consolidation of the democratic process and to the country's development. Addressing that issue calls for a twofold response, both military and humanitarian. Over the longer term, security must be ensured by strengthening the Haitian national police and to that end, police reform is essential.

But reforming the police will not in itself make it possible to establish security and the rule of law. The third priority must therefore be the justice sector — an area in which almost everything still needs to be done — and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) efforts, taking into account the unique nature of Haiti's case.

More generally, the State's capacities must be strengthened in many areas at both the national and the local levels, and Haiti's development must be promoted. No stabilization will be possible without the launching of a process of sustainable economic and social development. In that regard, we recall our endorsement of the Interim Cooperation Framework, which is necessary for the donors to coordinate among themselves and with the Haitian authorities.

When the new authorities take up their duties, it will mark the beginning of a new phase, but it will not mark the end of the stabilization process. The international community must be mobilized to assist the President-elect and the future Government in working for the country's recovery. In the new phase of peacebuilding and the rule of law that is beginning, continued international engagement alongside the Haitian authorities is essential. The Haitian people must be able to rely on the long-term engagement of the international community.

Mr. President, my delegation supports the draft presidential statement prepared by your delegation.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): Your presence today is very much welcome, Mr. President. I would like to congratulate and welcome President-elect Préval and to thank the Special Representative, Mr. Valdés, for his sustained contribution.

I align myself with the statement to be made shortly by the Austrian presidency on behalf of the European Union.

This morning, I believe it is vital that the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole give their clear, committed, long-term support to Haiti. Since 1995 there have been six United Nations missions in Haiti. Now is the time to deliver the simple message that we all stand behind the new Government of Haiti and recognize our responsibility to be there for it and recognize the role of that Government in leading the process in Haiti.

Peacebuilding has three essential elements. The first is to consolidate the democratic process, to build democratic institutions based on the rule of law. The immediate task is thus to get through the second round of elections. But elections are not an end in themselves; it is what comes after elections, what one puts in place. That is the big challenge for Haiti.

The second element is to tackle poverty and promote economic recovery in one of the poorest nations on Earth. The Minister from Guyana referred to the Millennium Development Goals. They are the basic elements that one would hope to see a Haitian Government put in place. But to do that is difficult enough for any country; for Haiti in its present plight it is exceedingly difficult. So there is a need for all of us to rally behind those priorities on the basis of programmes prepared and brought forward by the Government. The extension of the Interim Cooperation Framework to December 2007 is therefore a welcome step in the right direction, but so much more is needed.

The third component, in my view, is to deliver security. At the moment, the role of peacekeepers is vital, but there must also be progress on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as reform of the Haitian national police — referred to by a number of my colleagues — which was actually requested in resolution 1608 (2005). Here again, it is basic to security that the police take on a larger role and that the "no-go" areas in the capital and the other problems be tackled.

It is obvious from this discussion and from what we know that the challenges are immense. The United

Kingdom hopes that today's meeting will be a signal from the international community of our commitment to provide sustained support as the country embarks on a very new future — one in which we wish the country every success. As I said before, we have to be there in order to support it.

Finally, we can very much accept the draft presidential statement prepared by your delegation.

Mr. Faaborg-Andersen (Denmark): I join others in thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Valdés for his briefing and in welcoming President-elect Préval to the Council. Denmark aligns itself with the statement to be made shortly by Austria on behalf of the European Union.

Denmark congratulates René Préval on his electoral victory. The elections on 7 February were of historic significance. The high voter turnout and relatively peaceful conduct of the elections augur well for the future of democracy in Haiti. We look forward to the second round of elections, to be held on 21 April, which will benefit from the lessons learned during the first round. The timely conduct of local and municipal elections will also be crucial to ensuring that democracy takes hold at all levels of government in Haiti.

The security situation generally appears to be stable, and has improved significantly compared to a few months ago, including in Cité Soleil. The number of kidnappings has decreased dramatically in recent months. Nevertheless, violent crime is still widespread and remains a serious concern. We fully support the efforts of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to assist national authorities in further improving the security situation.

The new Government in Haiti will face a number of serious challenges, all of which are closely interrelated. Reconciliation is one of them. Denmark believes that a broad-based Government would help promote national reconciliation and calls on all Haitian political leaders to reach out and to come together in meeting those challenges. It is important that reconciliation efforts be institutionalized at each and every level of Haitian society. Successful reconciliation will facilitate progress on the other challenges faced by the country.

One such challenge is to strengthen the rule of law, including respect for human rights. That will require effective police reform supplemented by judicial reform, to address the serious problem, inter alia, posed by the fact that over 90 per cent of prison inmates remain in pretrial or preventive custody, including former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune. We fully support the continued efforts made in the area of police reform under Haiti's police chief, Mr. Andrésol, supported by MINUSTAH. In addition, we look forward to the Secretary-General's recommendations on how MINUSTAH can best support the reform and strengthening of key Government institutions. We hope that those recommendations will include a substantial section on reform of the justice sector.

National reconciliation and the rule of law will, hopefully, also provide a more conducive environment for achieving progress on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). Increased trust in the national authorities will help encourage people to hand in their weapons, especially if combined with socio-economic programmes that will allow for alternative livelihoods. Socio-economic assistance, including quick-impact projects, will be key in strengthening support and legitimacy for the new Government. Both DDR and efforts to tackle extreme poverty will contribute to improved security in Haiti.

Haiti's numerous challenges are closely interlinked. Neither Haiti's new Government nor the international community can afford to ignore any of them. In order to meet those challenges, a continued, long-term international commitment will be required. They cannot be resolved overnight, as the recent history of Haiti has vividly demonstrated. We are confident that the new Government will be fully committed to the task. We hope that the international community, this time around, will also be ready to stay the course.

I would also like to pay tribute to Special Representative Valdés and to the MINUSTAH team for their tireless efforts in assisting Haiti on its path to democracy, stability and development.

Finally, we thank the Argentine delegation for the presidential statement, to which we fully subscribe.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jorge Briz Abularach, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala.

Mr. Briz Abularach (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to

welcome you in particular. It is a privilege to see a close friend of Guatemala's, Mr. Jorge Enrique Taiana, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship, presiding over this meeting. It is very auspicious for us, and we are very pleased to know that we can count on the invaluable experience of a distinguished Argentine diplomat to guide us during this debate.

Allow me also to congratulate the President-elect of Haiti, Mr. René Préval, on his recent election and to convey our resolute support for his Government, since it is the focus of hopes that Haiti will achieve stability, leading to comprehensive development.

We welcome the initiative to convene an open debate on the situation in Haiti. We believe that it is of the utmost importance, at this critical period of challenges and transition, that we all engage in a dialogue on the need to promote national reconciliation, economic development and institutional strengthening in that brotherly country.

In that regard, my delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guyana, Mr. Samuel Insanally, on behalf of the Rio Group.

Ever since the crisis in Haiti began, my country has expressed its solidarity with the people of that noble country. Furthermore, the Government of Guatemala has expressed its sincere wish that all political sectors in Haiti reach a basic consensus that would enable them to build and consolidate a true democracy and to foster a positive environment that would secure the sustainable development of the country, for the benefit of all Haitians. Although the primary responsibility to achieve those crucial objectives lies with the Haitians themselves, we recognize that this will be possible only if the international community undertakes a coordinated, generous and long-term cooperation effort.

It is for those reasons that we reiterate our strong support for the work being carried out by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), whose main military and civilian components come from Latin America. Guatemala expresses its particular support for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti and Head of MINUSTAH, Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdés.

In line with our policy of opting for peaceful and negotiated solutions to conflicts, the Government of Guatemala has reaffirmed its commitment and willingness to participate in MINUSTAH by sending a contingent of 87 Guatemalan military police who are now stationed in Haiti, which for the time being, constitutes our contribution to MINUSTAH.

Guatemala believes that the role of the United Nations in Haiti is of particular importance, especially given the previous setbacks suffered by the international community in that country. Thus, this time we must view the Mission as a comprehensive, long-term operation that will continue until the goals set have been reached, that is, to give the Haitian people the possibility of self-rule in conditions of freedom and democracy, with improved economic and social conditions.

We must take careful note of the mistakes made in the past, and, for those reasons, we are convinced that the international community's engagement in Haiti is a long-term commitment.

The Heads of State and Government of the member States of the Central American Integration System, meeting in Panama on 9 March 2005, underscored the importance of the democratic process in Haiti for the entire region. They therefore called for continuing MINUSTAH's presence until that process had been consolidated.

With regard to the challenges now confronting Haiti, we share the concern about the current fragile security situation in the country, as well as about the former army's ongoing negative influence. We are especially concerned about the challenge posed by armed gangs linked to criminal groups. We are aware that the challenges on the streets are enormous and that such armed gangs control entire neighbourhoods in which impunity and violence conspire against the population.

The weakness of the judicial system is another major obstacle confronting the Haitian people today. There can be no delay in providing technical assistance to law and order institutions. We must help the Haitian State to strengthen democratic institutions, which ensure peaceful, productive and orderly coexistence.

Guatemala therefore deems it important that the international community, regional organizations, international financial institutions, agencies,

programmes and non-governmental organizations continue to support the people of Haiti to enable them to achieve the full enjoyment of their fundamental rights and freedoms, while at the same time supporting the new authorities in investigating abuses so as to put an end to impunity through the reform, restructuring and strengthening of the national police and the judicial system. Effective and speedy justice is not possible without those institutions. In that regard, we appeal to the new authorities urgently to adopt concrete measures to prevent and punish criminal acts through the effective investigation of accusations and the prosecution of those responsible.

At the moment, it is not enough to solve the country's current security crisis by putting in place short-term measures. It is necessary to demand that a comprehensive approach be taken that addresses the political situation, security, the administration of justice, human rights and economic development. Without a comprehensive approach, it will be difficult to break the vicious circle that fuels frustration, violence and lack of confidence in the mechanisms provided for by the rule of law.

Guatemala would like to underscore the importance of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. We share the concern of other countries with regard not only to the delay in the implementation of the programmes proposed by MINUSTAH but also to the problems linked to the financing of such programmes, especially as regards reintegration.

Although the process of free elections is in itself a significant achievement, it is also crucial to begin a process of inclusive national dialogue that will make it possible for all political and social groups to exercise true self-determination.

My delegation cannot fail to mention such fundamental problems as extreme poverty and high rates of illiteracy and malnutrition, which continue to deprive Haitians of their fundamental economic, social and cultural rights, thereby exacerbating the consequences of disregard for fundamental civil and political rights.

We acknowledge the fact that the new authorities will not be able to substantially resolve those problems in the short term. Nevertheless, they can begin to put in place coherent and comprehensive initiatives. We therefore call upon them to draft and implement, in cooperation with all sectors of society and with the unwavering support of the international community, a long-term development strategy that will make it possible to address the social and economic needs of every Haitian citizen.

With regard to the challenges and tasks facing Haiti and its people, my delegation calls upon the international community, and upon donor countries in particular, to provide Haiti, in the context of the Interim Cooperation Framework, with the support and assistance necessary for Haiti to overcome the problems of the past and to move the country towards a future where there is rule of law, democracy and full enjoyment of human rights.

It is therefore essential that we face Haiti's challenges as common challenges and that we fulfil our duty to demonstrate solidarity with that country, which has been so unjustly punished throughout history. We will continue to be committed to the reconstruction and stabilization effort that will enable the Haitian people to be the masters of their own destiny and the agents of their own development.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Argentine Republic.

I would first like to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his statement. I wish to thank him in particular for the concepts set out in his intervention, which provide us with crucial guidance in following the Haitian political process. I would also like to thank Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdés, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his detailed briefing on the current situation in Haiti. As we near the end of his term as Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), we would like to convey to Ambassador Valdés our particular gratitude for his political and professional skills and, of course, his human qualities, which greatly contributed to a promising future for MINUSTAH and Haiti.

In that regard, Argentina would like to reiterate its particular desire to see as the next special representative a national of a Latin American country contributing troops to the Mission.

I would, of course, like in particular to congratulate Mr. René Préval, President-elect of Haiti,

as well as to thank him for his presence at this meeting and for his statement concerning his country's future challenges. Argentina would also like to convey its warmest greetings to the people of Haiti, who turned out in great numbers to carry out their civic duty despite the difficulties they had to overcome to exercise their right to vote.

We also wish to thank the Organization of American States for its invaluable cooperation in organizing the elections.

Argentina would like to affirm in particular that it associates itself with the statement made this morning by Mr. Samuel Insanally, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guyana, on behalf of the Rio Group.

My country believes that the upcoming transfer of power to a representative and democratic Government will be the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Haiti as well as an opportunity that must not be squandered, so that the Haitian people and their leaders, with the ongoing support of the international community, may finally leave behind instability, poverty, stagnation and political violence.

We believe that it is possible at this stage to make a preliminary assessment of the presence of the United Nations in Haiti. We believe that MINUSTAH has been a decisive factor in successfully re-establishing the secure and stable environment that contributed to the holding of the electoral process, thereby laying the foundations for the reconstitution of institutions and the relaunching of economic activity.

Moreover, the Mission has made it possible to demonstrate Latin America's commitment with respect to events in the hemisphere, and especially its commitment to the tasks of peacebuilding in the region. As a result, our country and the other Latin American troop-contributing countries in MINUSTAH have initiated a coordination process among their Foreign Ministries and Defence Ministries with the aim of achieving greater efficiency in the work of the contingents and with the final goal of identifying joint and complementary projects in the field.

The Security Council and agencies in the field have a great responsibility ahead of them: to cooperate in this new stage so that the mistakes of the past will not be repeated. The ongoing electoral process must be swiftly brought to a conclusion to permit the speedy handover of power and the forming of the Parliament, as well as local and municipal governments. The elections are a first step towards democratic reconstruction, but long-term stability requires other elements as well. We reiterate, in this context, our conviction that social and economic development is crucial to guarantee security and democratic governance.

We are aware that President Préval has an immense task ahead of him. The strategy for peacebuilding must, in our opinion, focus on several pillars. The first is security, the need to consolidate the security situation that, we must say, has been improving in recent months. Second is the rule of law. It is crucial to rebuild institutions that make it possible to move forward with the establishment of the rule of law. Thirdly, a long-term plan must be implemented for sustainable economic revitalization that would make it possible to direct the energies of the Haitian people and the support of the international community. Fourthly, there is need to very swiftly build or rebuild a basic infrastructure that would bring essential basic services closer to citizens. It is crucial to assure the people, in a tangible way, that democracy will bring about specific advantages and that those advantages will be visible.

Among the outstanding challenges, the new Government, with the support of the international community, will have to continue to work for reconciliation among the Haitian people through an inclusive political dialogue. Reconciliation is not legislated; rather, it must be rooted in the sum of efforts of all members of society. The road to understanding and the acceptance of democratic rules will make an essential difference in overcoming problems of the past.

Reforms of the police and of the judicial and correctional systems must be fostered. Haiti needs to reform its security structure so that it may count on a well-equipped, modern and efficient system that fully respects individual guarantees. Our country is ready to cooperate in the area of justice and the promotion of human rights. Haiti must have qualified officers and strong and trustworthy democratic institutions.

In the area of development, the international community must continue to support Haiti in elaborating a comprehensive strategy to reduce poverty. It will be crucial for the new authorities to redefine their priorities in the context of the Interim Cooperation Framework, identifying priority projects

that would meet the genuine needs of the Haitian people. Job creation and the provision of basic social services are two of the central issues to which special attention must be paid in the near future.

Argentina will continue its cooperation and will support Haiti through its presence in MINUSTAH and through cooperation projects already presented through the Interim Cooperation Framework, as well as coordinating humanitarian assistance through the White Helmets initiative. But we would like to reaffirm the commitment and the agreement reached with President Préval during his recent visit to Buenos Aires, according to which the cooperation will enable adding on and having an important impact. It will be coordinated, and the action is not merely one that pleases the donor but is often not advantageous to the recipient. And so, we will continue to be available to President Préval.

The new stage that is beginning in Haiti will demand the commitment of all, especially of its ruling class. Haitian society in its entirety has an important challenge ahead, and it should be involved in a peaceful and effective way in the daily political process.

In this context, we would like to take advantage of the presence of President-elect René Préval to reaffirm the long-term commitment of the international community, and especially of Latin America, to the development and the strengthening of lasting rule of law in his country. We have no doubt in our ability to work together and constructively to achieve these goals.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the President of the Economic and Social Council, the Permanent Representative of Tunisia, Ambassador Ali Hachani.

Mr. Hachani (President of the Economic and Social Council) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour and a pleasure to address this meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Haiti in my capacity as President of the Economic and Social Council. I would like to thank the Argentine presidency of the Council for this opportunity. I also would like to express my sincere congratulations to Prime Minister Latortue for his excellent efforts over the last two years, as well as the President-elect, René Préval. I ask him to accept our wishes for success in his office and the assurances of our trust in his ability, based on his political experience at the highest level, to set Haiti on the path of stability and development.

Haiti is at a turning point in its history. Following the political transition over the last two years, the country is now able to put into place a stable administrative and institutional system that can free the vital forces of the nation and strengthen the workings of government to meet the basic needs of its population. The fight against poverty, an aim that brings together the entire international community, can be undertaken only in a climate that is politically and socially peaceful and through strengthening public structures.

The correlation between social and economic development and political stability no longer needs to be demonstrated. Several bodies within the United Nations have underscored the clear risk of destabilization and political violence in poor countries and the difficulty of maintaining stability when massive international assistance is lacking. Haiti is an illustration of this. It is therefore crucial for the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council to work hand in hand to respond to the problems of that country.

Haiti has been on the agenda of the Economic and Social Council for a number of years. The Ad Hoc Advisory Group, established in 1999 to put together recommendations on Haiti's development in the long term, was reactivated in November 2004 and has become ever more relevant today, now that the country is experiencing a restored stability. In its report to the Economic and Social Council last year, this Group underscored the seriousness of not only the economic crisis, but also that of the social and environmental crises across the country.

We are all aware of the magnitude of the task facing the Haitian authorities. In this context, only a long-term partnership between the authorities and the international community can bring about the long-awaited recovery. Over recent months, the Ad Hoc Group has met with the Haitian authorities who deal with planning and coordination of foreign assistance and who are working to draft a poverty reduction strategy. Quite recently, it met members of the Strategic Brainstorming Cell, which is under the umbrella of the Ministry of Planning and is responsible

for working out tracks for thinking on development over the long term. We believe that such efforts are promising, for an agreement on the major pillars of development of that country, bolstered by a nationally shared vision, is a prerequisite to recovery. This thinking could also contribute to bringing about a national dialogue, to which we are looking forward.

The international community needs to contribute to Haiti's development and to be responsive and generous over the long term. The Economic and Social Council has made a commitment to monitoring and guiding this process, in particular through its Ad Hoc Advisory Group. It will continue to do so at the 2006 substantive session in Geneva based on the forthcoming report of the Group and the recommendations to be put forward therein, with an emphasis on the consistency and sustainability of international assistance.

By virtue of the combined efforts of various parties, Haitian and international, Haiti can resolve the crisis and have prospects for development in keeping with the aspirations of its people within a broad national consensus. Everyone must make every possible effort to that end. Rest assured that the Economic and Social Council will do its part for Haiti.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker is Ambassador Antonio Patriota, Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Patriota (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Sir, I would like to convey to you and to the Argentine delegation the heartfelt congratulations of Minister Celso Amorim on your excellent work as Security Council President and to welcome your decision to convene this open debate on Haiti. The presence of the President-elect, René Préval, takes on special importance at today's meeting.

I would also like to convey the condolences of the Brazilian Government over the untimely death of Ambassador Fénelon of Haiti yesterday in Brasilia.

We are meeting against the backdrop of the success of the electoral process in Haiti. The large turnout at the presidential elections in February has conveyed to us a message of hope and shows that a democratic Haiti is clearly possible. We welcome the adoption of the electoral calendar for the second round of parliamentary and local elections, and we hope that this can take place in a climate of transparency and stability. The election of a Haitian parliament that is representative and democratic will complete the electoral process, which lies at the heart of the mandate of MINUSTAH. Brazil would like to encourage the new Government to promote an inclusive and constructive political dialogue among all Haitians, which would make it possible to improve governance and create the proper conditions for new efforts to promote economic development and social justice. This is the pact of governance referred to by President Préval in his statement today.

My country reiterates its firm commitment to the efforts of the United Nations to promote stabilization and reconstruction in Haiti. I would like to express our satisfaction at Mr. Préval's visit to Brazil on 9 and 10 March, during which he met with President Lula and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and which was followed by visits to Chile and Argentina. We also consider more recent developments towards closer relations between Haiti and CARICOM to be very positive and an important signal that Haiti is rejoining the Caribbean family and, more broadly, the Latin American family. The presence here today of several Ministers and Deputy Ministers of the region bears witness to these closer relations.

The future of Haiti is a vital challenge for the United Nations. The country's problems have deep roots in political and social and economic matters that go beyond security issues. We cannot simply limit ourselves to seeking solutions from a military viewpoint. We believe that the international community must continue to support Haiti with the prompt release of financial resources and sustained interest in the economic, social and institutional reconstruction of the country. Renewed international assistance efforts should focus on strengthening basic areas such as the judiciary and the police, as well as development activities with respect to infrastructure so as to create better conditions for sustainable development and to foster job creation.

The international community, in dialogue with the Haitian Government, must elaborate proposals for the future scope of the MINUSTAH mandate. It is also important to include Haiti in the agenda of the recently created Peacebuilding Commission, as was underlined today by Chile and other countries.

With a view to preparing for future challenges, the members of the Contact Group in the World Bank decided that the time had come to organize a new donor conference which will take place before September 2006 to extend the Interim Cooperation Framework until the end of 2007. Brazil will have the honour of welcoming in Brasilia a ministerial meeting among donor countries and the new Haitian Government in May this year. We are also working through diplomatic channels to support forgiveness of Haitian debt through the International Monetary Fund.

Brazil believes that we now have a good opportunity for the establishment of an action plan to support the first 100 days of the Préval Government, a plan that is capable of creating a significant number of jobs with the comprehensive use of the potential of the engineering companies. I would like to highlight the role played by the core group in coordinating the efforts of the international community in Haiti and the importance of the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Advisory Group.

We must also pay tribute to President Boniface Alexandre for his tireless efforts in the current transitional period. Likewise, we thank Prime Minister Gérard Latortue for having guided the transition, which made it possible for us to be here today to welcome a new phase in the Haitian process and to reaffirm our confidence in the future of the country.

We would also like to express our warm thanks for the skill and the dedication of Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdés to our region. It is a source of special satisfaction to have a representative of Chilean diplomacy at the head of the international community's efforts in Haiti. Like you, Mr. President, we believe that, given the great political and financial commitment of Latin American countries to stabilization in Haiti, it would advisable that his replacement should also come from a country in the region.

(*spoke in French*)

Allow me, through you, Mr. President, to convey to the Haitian delegation and to President-elect René Préval our warmest congratulations and firmest support. As President Lula has said, Brazilian troops will remain in Haiti as long as it is necessary. You may rest assured of our determination to ensure that the United Nations makes every effort to ensure that Haiti can embark on the path of sustainable development in an atmosphere of democratic consolidation and truly become once again the pearl of the Antilles.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list. With the consent of Council members, I intend to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m.